



State of Wisconsin
Jim Doyle, Governor



Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection
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Flood conditions push manure storage facilities close to overflowing
Farmers urged to seek advice on temporarily reducing manure levels

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MADISON - The heavy rains that have caused flooding in southern Wisconsin are increasing the risk that manure storage facilities will overflow or fail, and that spreading manure on already saturated fields will result in the manure running off the land and into nearby streams and lakes.

Farmers are urged to contact their county Land Conservation Department or state water quality and agriculture officials for immediate advice on options for addressing these manure management challenges so that farmers can continue their operations during these difficult conditions and avoid any harm to state waters.

"Farmers are under significant stress right now from the flooding and we stand ready to help advise them on ways to manage manure under these very difficult conditions," says Gordon Stevenson, who leads the Department of Natural Resources runoff management program.

"Staff at our agencies and our partners can work with a farmer to identify options that can help them temporarily reduce the levels inside their manure storage facility until field conditions are more appropriate for more significant emptying of storage facilities," says Jim VandenBrook of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, or DATCP.

Larger livestock operations with a water quality protection permit from the DNR should contact their local DNR contact, while operators of smaller farms that do not have a permit should contact their county Land Conservation Department, DATCP engineers or nutrient management specialists, or Natural Resources Conservation Service staff.

(more)

Heavy rains across southern Wisconsin are filling up manure storage facilities, some to the point of overflowing, but also saturating the fields that farmers would otherwise use to apply the manure to empty the storage facilities. Additional rains forecast for coming days increases the risks even more that manure storage facilities will be filled to overflowing and that applying manure to fields will result in runoff to streams and rivers, Stevenson says.

“Many fields in parts of the state are either saturated or close to saturation, creating a situation where the risk of a runoff event increases significantly if they were to apply manure. On top of that, additional forecasted rains are likely to raise the risk of a runoff event even further,” Stevenson says.

For the future, farmers are encouraged to develop emergency response plans that would help them make better, more informed decisions by identifying options of what to do in situations like this ahead of time. In addition, farmers need to evaluate whether they have enough storage to accommodate heavy precipitation or other adverse conditions while maintaining a margin of safety. Ensuring adequate manure storage can prevent spills and eliminate the additional costs of emergency response as well as the increased risks associated with manure handling in very wet or unfavorable conditions.